

EARTH'S SECRET WEAPON

(by Robert Bee)

Dora Dutton's generous figure filled the doorway to her husband's study. "George," she snapped. "Didn't I ask you to bring in the washing?"

George didn't look up from his stamp collection, a new purchase in his tweezers. "Yes dear, you did and I was going to just after..."

Dora stomped her foot. "Don't bother George. Play with your pretty bits of paper. I'll do it myself." Dora headed for the back door, mumbling about useless lazy husbands and the cruel world generally as she went.

Back in his study, George let out a sigh of exasperation, followed by another of contentment as he addressed his pretty, yet precious, bit of paper. "Don't mind her, she doesn't understand."

Dora burst out the laundry door into the immaculate backyard. The buffalo lawn was meticulously mown, the edges razor sharp. She cast her eyes around, looking for something to criticise. A dead rosebud maybe, a leaf on the pathway. Bird droppings on the garden table. But no, everything was lickity split. She scowled. Typical of that cruel husband of hers, never giving her a chance for criticism. Then she saw the washing on the rotary line and smiled. Except for that, she thought with delight.

As expected the washing was dry, courtesy of the beautiful blue and cloudless sky. Dora began unpepping the garments and dropping them in the basket. No point in folding them now, she decided. George can do that later.

That thought was interrupted mid-smirk by the sudden coolness of a shadow that filled the backyard. Dora automatically looked up at the unexpected cloud. "That's strange," she muttered. "How can a cloud be as perfectly round as that?" She squinted and looked harder at the cloud and was amazed to see a white circle appear in the cloud's exact centre. A circle that seemed to be getting brighter.

"Now that's very strange." On an impulse, she called out. "George, quickly, come..."

Then Dora's world was all light.

In his study, George poised mid-stamp. He thought he heard Dora call his name. He looked at the two penny red resting in his tweezers beneath the eye of his magnifying glass. Then he looked towards the door in the direction of Dora's call. What to do? Finally self preservation prevailed. He put down the stamp and walked out to the back door.

As before, the sky was cloudless, the lawn was weedless but the garden... was Dora-less. George frowned in puzzlement. He was sure he had heard Dora call him, and the load of washing had been partially taken down from the line. He strolled around the backyard, through the house, then onto the front lawn, even looking up and down the street. No sign of Dora. He checked the garage and found the car unmoved.

Curiouser and curiouser, thought George. Where could she be?

Oh well, I'm sure she'll turn up, hopefully in time for dinner, which reminded him to detour via the kitchen to take the chops from the freezer. As he walked back to his study and pretty bits of paper, he chuckled to himself. "Who knows, she may have been abducted by aliens."

Life is full of frivolous jokes that have unknowingly put their finger on reality. As Dora stood in the receding pool of light, a pair of pink panties in one hand and two pegs in the other, her words "...out here right now" echoed in a dome shaped room. She slowly turned full circle, taking in the featureless walls and ceiling, looking for a clue as to where she was. She listened. Apart from a faint background humming, there was silence.

Dora tried to remember what had happened. The clothes line, a dark cloud, a bright light... A bright light? Oh my god, she thought with a sudden panic. Could I have died and gone to heaven? She felt her ample bosom. Yes, heart still beating. But... maybe your heart still works in heaven. Dora looked around the room again. Pretty austere for heaven. If it is heaven, God ought to sack his interior decorators. Unless... Dora paused as she mulled over the alternative. No, definitely not. Why would she end up down there?

Dora stood alone, suddenly insecure, as she pondered her life, her treatment of George, as well as her circle of associates. Yes, associates, as she could hardly truthfully call them friends the way she sometimes, well most usually, spoke to them. If she had the chance to do it all over again, she could act differently, more caringly, sensitively. Okay, less bitchily. Please she thought prayerfully, give me another chance. Please.

Just then, a panel slid open in the previously seamless wall. Light spilled in from a room beyond and two figures stepped through to stand before her. Wordlessly, they regarded her closely, from her toes to her head, taking in her every feature, every blemish. Their very silence, the casualness of their examination screamed confidence, contempt and certainly superiority.

As well it might. Dora, conscious of their impersonal but intimate scrutiny, stared back at the tall, spindly, long limbed grey skinned hairless creatures before her, each wearing nothing but a utility belt festooned with strange instruments of unimaginable function. She simultaneously reached a number of profound conclusions.

One – these were definitely not angels. No wings. Nor for that matter were they the Devil’s minions. No fanged teeth or pointy ears. In fact no ears. So she decided she was not dead.

As to whether these creatures, whatever they were, would turn out to be friendly or otherwise, only time would tell. In fact Dora was starting to harbour a strong suspicion she might be the foil of some complex university student prank.

Her main conclusion, however, was it looked like she had been given another chance, just as she had prayed for. It was time to grasp it.

Dora stuffed the panties and pegs into a skirt pocket, straightened her hair, attempted a smile and cleared her throat to speak soothingly.

The two creatures shared a sideways glance and a small nod, then one took a small step towards her, arm outstretched.

Dora had been given her second chance. But type will prevail, and it did.

“Hold it right there mister,” Dora snapped. “I demand to know who’s in charge of this outfit... and where I am... and I demand to know now.” And with that ultimatum, Dora strode forward like a battleship at flank speed, past the stunned hosts and through the wall opening into the next room. As the surprised hosts finally caught up with her, Dora performed an inspection tour of what appeared to be an operating theatre, with other tall grey hosts standing with exotic tools and instruments in hands. Just as she had suspected – medical students.

“Just look at this place,” Dora exclaimed. “How do you expect to operate on people in here? Look at you lot. Where are your gowns? And your masks? And, my god, where are your gloves? Call yourselves doctors?” She reached up on her toes and waved a pointed finger at the face of one of the grey hosts whose reddish eyes opened alarmingly wide. “I’ll be reporting this to the Registrar.”

Doris strode onwards through another doorway into a larger room lined with racks of... what... weapons? Surely, the university regiment barracks. Oh dear, how obvious. She approached the nearest host, her fists on her hips. “And this place. Call it a barracks. Atrocious. My George would soon fix this up proper. Look there... rifles... or whatever... all askew. Hey you,” Dora called out to a nearby host. “Yes you, straighten those rifles up... and those helmetty things and... and... “Dora stared closely... “those grenade whatsies, they should be in a neat pile.”

Dora watched, tapping her foot as a number of hosts rushed to sort the mess. Satisfied, just, she turned to face one of her original welcomers. “And you, my good... “:she looked up...” tall man, didn’t I say I wanted to talk to the man in charge?”

The two and a half metre tall host looked down at Dora, its red eyes darkening somewhat and one of its long limbs edged, twitching, towards an object on its utility belt, only to jump as Dora quickly slapped the limb away.

“No time to make a call,” she snapped. “Go get him. Now. Off you trot,” and Dora made twiddling walking motions with her fingers in case the poor student didn’t quite get the message. She then settled her generous rear on a nearby tall footstool. “I’ll wait here.” She looked around at the ring of staring eyes. “Well, don’t just stand there. Make yourselves useful. Get me a cup of tea.”

George looked up from his stamps as Dora entered his study. “Oh, you’re back,” he said. “Where did you get to?”

“What do you mean?” Dora said. “I haven’t been anywhere.”

“I went out when you called me an hour or so ago and you were gone. Nowhere to be found.”

“Don’t be silly George. I’ve been here all the time.” Dora turned to leave, then stopped. “Oh, that’s why I came in here. To give you this. I found it on the back doorstep. It’s for you, I suppose.”

George took the item from Dora. “What do you mean ‘you suppose’?”. Then he looked at the address on the filmy wrapping. ‘To the male of the Household.’ “Oh, that could be me. Thanks.”

Dora left the room to tinker with dinner. George removed the strange wrapping and examined the shiny tablet it had contained. It had one button, so he pressed it. The screen on the tablet lit up and weird symbols flashed across it, then intelligible letters whirled and formed a readable message. George swallowed, often, as he read the message.

#Earthling. Your women are formidable and fierce. We would not dare attempt to match ourselves against you even more formidable males. We have decided. You may keep your planet. We will be long gone when you read this. For strategic purposes we have erased your female’s memory of us. She has seen too much.#

George dropped the tablet with a start as it burst into flames, then wondered how he would explain the carpet burn mark to his formidable and fierce wife. But then, he found himself smiling, as an even more formidable male, that shouldn’t be a problem. He was enjoying that thought when heard Dora cry out in a disgusted voice. “Oh George, you only took half the washing off the line.”